



CALIFORNIA CHILDREN'S 5 A DAY—POWER PLAY! CAMPAIGN

Exploratory Communications Research with Young Children

A REPORT OF QUALITATIVE FINDINGS FROM:

30 Dyad Interviews with Low-Income 6-8 year old
Boys and Girls in Sacramento and Los Angeles

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Prepared For:

California 5 a Day Campaign

Prepared By:

Leapfrog Marketing Research, San Francisco, CA
and JMD Research & Consulting, Chicago, IL

www.dorrie.paynter.com

Phone: 415-641-6140

e-mail: Dorrie@LeapfrogResearch.com

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I. INTRODUCTION

A. BACKGROUND

The California Children's "5 A Day" campaign team is focused on increasing fruit and vegetable consumption as well as physical activity among California children in general, and low-income children in particular. The "5 A Day" campaign message has been promoted in schools (via posters and educational materials) and in the mass media (via radio and television advertisements.)

Last year, qualitative research on this topic was conducted among 9-11 year olds, who represent the primary target for the "5 A Day" message. The findings of that study have been presented in a separate report by Leapfrog Marketing Research. This year, the "5 A Day" team was interested in obtaining the views and opinions of 6-8 year olds with the goal of determining whether younger children operate with the same barriers and motivations to healthier habits as older children do, and if so, how effective the current campaign is with this audience. Leapfrog Marketing Research hired Jean McDonald of JMD Research & Consulting in Chicago to conduct the moderating and write the report for this project.

B. PROJECT OBJECTIVES

More specifically, the objectives of this research were twofold:

Regarding habits surrounding fruit and vegetable consumption and active play:

- To explore children's beliefs and practices surrounding food and activity.
- To explore, as much as possible, the larger family/social context affecting these beliefs and practices.

- To discover specific motivators and points of resistance to be considered as future “5 A Day” communications are developed.

Regarding current “5 A Day” communication materials:

- To discover children’s beliefs about the main messages of the communications.
- To explore specific interpretations of phrases and images in the communications.
- To assess if communications targeted to 9-11 year olds are likely to be effective with 6-8 year olds.

C. METHODOLOGY

For this research a total of 30 45-minute to one hour friendship dyads were conducted among children...

- Ages 6-8 in grades K-2. Because this research was conducted just after the close of the school year, some children had just completed second grade and considered themselves third-graders.
- Representing an ethnic mix including African-American, Hispanic, and Caucasian children.
- From low-income households of no more than 185% of the federal poverty level. While all of these children were eligible for a free or reduced-price school lunch program, not all respondents participated in the program.
- Who have no physical disabilities or dietary restrictions that would affect their eating or activity habits.

The value of friendship dyads among children this age has several aspects:

- Children are more comfortable with a familiar peer in the room than alone with an unfamiliar adult.

- The dichotomy between “what grown-ups want to hear” and “what my friends think is cool” is minimized when both an adult and a peer are present.
- Friends can act as reality checks for one another. For example, children are less likely to present themselves as overly virtuous in the presence of a peer who knows their real habits and beliefs.
- This forum allows for some of the dynamic interaction that can occur in a group setting, but also provides children this age with the level of individual attention they need.

Research was conducted...

- In Sacramento on June 26 and 27, 2003.
- In Los Angeles on June 30 and July 1, 2003.

For specific interview content, please see the discussion guide in the Appendix of this report.

D. HOMEWORK AND STIMULUS

Children were asked to keep a one day food diary with help from their parents. In addition, they were asked to make collages. Half of the children were assigned collages representing their feelings about fruits and vegetables while the other half were to represent their feelings about physical activity.

These assignments served multiple objectives:

- The collages were a fun and age-appropriate way for children to express how they felt and thought about the subject they were assigned to visualize.

- The food diary acted as a “reality check”: a measure for understanding how frequently children actually eat fruits and vegetables compared with their perception of how much they ate.

IMPORTANT NOTE:

This is a report of qualitative research. It is exploratory in nature; that is, it is used to elicit a range of responses, stimulate dialogue, generate ideas, and develop hypotheses. Findings are intended for directional guidance and understanding. While we hope that the respondents expressed views that are representative of the populations addressed in the research, the results of qualitative research are not meant to be quantified nor are they meant to take the place of a quantitative study.

II. DETAILED FINDINGS

These low-income 6-8 year olds need no convincing of the virtues of good nutrition and plentiful exercise. They believe strongly in the power of healthy habits and feel they are on top of the information when it comes to these related subjects. They know that fruits and vegetables and active play are positive forces in their lives, affecting everything from helping them to grow, to sinking baskets to keeping them out of gangs.

It is as though these children saw themselves as little electric generators. Eating right and being active is, in their minds, the “fuel” that keeps them performing at maximum levels without overloading and becoming either “*hyper*” or “*lazy*.” Unlike other foods or behaviors, the power of these healthy habits is so strong and “good”, that its benefits go way beyond the moment, way beyond the norm.

However, as virtuous and magical as good eating and exercise are perceived to be, they are not automatic or assumed parts of these children’s lives. In other words, despite their perceived “goodness” (and perhaps even because of it), healthy eating and exercising are generally **not** the default behavior options for most children. Some reasons for this:

- We saw evidence that fruits and vegetables are often not readily available food choices and when they are, tend to be treated differently, with greater deference than other, less healthy foods. The result is that eating a fruit or vegetable (especially a vegetable) is a relatively special occurrence, and liking it is akin to earning a badge of maturity.
- Active play is not an automatic part of these children’s lives either, but for different reasons. Safety concerns and lack of time on the part of parents to supervise mean that children’s time outside is limited. As much as they would love to be running around outside, they and their parents believe it is safer—and all-around easier—for them to be inside playing quietly.

A. Real Life and Magical Thinking

These 6-8 year olds' beliefs about healthy life choices are strongly affected by a combination of **imagination**—at their age, they are not yet empirical thinkers and still believe in magic to some extent—and **education** about what constitutes good choices. These children believe they know what healthy habits are, but they wildly overestimate the benefits of these habits as well as the extent to which they themselves practice such habits.

Further, these children have life circumstances that raise barriers to complete fulfillment of the healthy ideal. For example, they are too young to be expected to think much about or influence grocery-shopping choices for their households, so their access to fruits and vegetables is largely out of their control. In this instance, magical thinking comes into play as children interpret the intensity of their *desire* to practice healthy habits as actual fulfillment of a healthy lifestyle.

1. Perceptions of Fruits and Vegetables

A key finding with regard to fruit and vegetable consumption in these children's homes is that healthy choices are not default choices. That is, eating fruit or a full serving of a vegetable is an exception rather than an assumption. This creates an aura of specialness around fruits and vegetables that fuels many of these children's perceptions. Further, the exceptional nature of fruits and vegetables is reinforced by children's restricted access to them at home.

It is important to note that, as with the 9-11 year olds, while fruits and vegetables are perceived as equal in their health benefits, fruits are considered much more easily acceptable and pleasurable, while vegetables are more a necessity to be

reckoned with. Throughout this report, when necessary, fruits and vegetables will be discussed separately.

a. Good Kids Eat Their Vegetables...

For these children, eating fruits and vegetables—especially vegetables—is akin to doing all their homework, cleaning their rooms, or being polite to their elders. It is a sign of maturity and virtuousness that carries the expectation of some sort of recognition or reward. In other words, eating fruits and vegetables is not represented as one of the default positions of being a kid but is instead a goal to aspire to.

“I don’t [eat tomatoes] but when I grow up I do ... Because grown-ups eat tomatoes.”

- Unprompted, these children listed health, nutrition, and “growing” related issues, as the principal reason for eating fruits and vegetables. This is very similar to the 9-11 year olds who also add in sweet taste (for fruit) and energy.
- The association of fruit and vegetable consumption with virtuousness is quite intense for some children. They seem to suggest that really liking the taste of fruits and vegetables would almost take some of the virtue out of eating them.

“[Saying that we like fruits and vegetables] doesn’t mean that we like them because they taste good. We like them because they are fruits and vegetables.”

“It doesn’t matter about the taste, it just matters how you think about eating [them].”

- Vegetables in particular are considered virtuous because children like them less. Fruit is sweet and appealing and therefore, it seems, requires less marshalling of kids' maturity to consume.
- Their ability to list fruits and vegetables they like does not contradict this finding.
 - “Good Taste” was not often given as the main reason to eat fruits and vegetables. Within the categories of fruits and vegetables, there are clearly some choices that are tastier than others, but in the whole array of foods available, fruits and vegetables are not an automatic choice for taste reasons. This is in contrast to the findings with older children who mention the sweet, juicy taste as one the main reasons they like fruit. (This is not true for vegetables.)
 - Children who do seem to genuinely like certain vegetables or a wide variety of fruits take pride in being exceptional. They indicate that liking vegetables is a “*grown-up*” characteristic and a sign of maturity.

b. ...and I'm a Good Kid

i. Doing the Best I Can

These children extended their magical thinking to their own patterns of fruit and vegetable consumption. While most of these children believe they should eat more fruits and vegetables each day, they also suggest that they are earning their good-kid points as best they can. It is almost as though they believe their intentions should count for something toward meeting their healthy food quota each day, even if those intentions are not fulfilled.

- Food diaries reflect a much different reality from children's reported behaviors. Often food diaries reflected only one or two servings of fruits and vegetables (and then often only fruits) at the same time children were expressing their belief in the benefits of healthy eating.

- Several of these children reported that their favorite foods from their food diaries were the fruits they ate. It is unclear the extent to which this is an unprompted opinion or the desire to show the adult moderator that they are good kids who appreciate the things that are good for them.

ii. “Other” Kids

The perception that eating fruits and vegetables is part of being a good kid is supported by the way these children talk about unhealthy eating habits.

- It is always “other kids” who are overweight or eat too much junk or do not eat enough healthy food. These children do not cast themselves in the role of unhealthy eaters.
 - The unhealthy foods they admit to eating are cast as “*treats*,” which minimizes the “*junkiness*” by making these foods seem like rare exceptions and possibly rewards for some accomplishment or special occasion.
 - A couple of children suggested that sugary snacks have a place in their diets—“*we need sugar, we’re kids!*”—but they believe they are among the children who can balance it out with healthy foods and stay good kids.
- At times, the “other kids” were cast in a particularly negative light, as in the dyads who spoke of junk food being the main staple of “*gangsters*” and “*ghetto people*.”
- Even children who appeared overweight and/or discussed their need to lose weight displayed a disconnect when associating their weight issues with unhealthy eating habits. That is, they may be overweight, but they are good children who are trying their best.

iii. Some is Better Than None

The idea that any fruit and vegetable consumption is considered virtuous is supported by the perception on the part of some children that a single serving of a fruit or vegetable—again, it seems, especially a vegetable—has a halo that colors the whole day's eating. It is as though by being able to say "I ate all my peas," children have earned their healthy eating points for the day, and the idea that they need more frequent servings of fruits and vegetables is lost in the accomplishment of having eaten something that is rather grown-up and good for them. It is unclear from last fall's research if this is the same case with 9-11 year olds.

2. Fruits and Vegetables as Magic Foods

These children displayed the most powerful imaginative thinking when discussing the benefits of fruit and vegetable consumption. Eating fruits and vegetables is believed to be able to cure, augment, or boost almost any aspect of these children's lives.

Clearly, these children have been exposed to a huge tangle of messages regarding nutrition. They repeated words such as "fat," "calories," "protein," "calcium," and "vitamins" without being entirely certain of their meaning except whether they were good or bad things to have in their diets. One little boy who couldn't remember what grade he was in reported with confidence that he had "*low-cholesterol*" Cheerios for breakfast.

The ubiquitousness of the nutrition chatter around them, combined with their relative lack of clear understanding of how it works, reinforces the beliefs that eating right is enormously important and the right foods can fix almost anything.

a. Perceptions About Nutrition

As noted, these children possess a vocabulary surrounding nutrition, but they know only the positive and negative valences of the words, not their complex meanings. This simplistic view extends to the conclusions they have reached about nutrition.

- Fruits and vegetables are credited with containing all sorts of nutrients from protein to minerals to calcium.
- There is a belief that fruits and vegetables are good for children regardless of other factors. For example, fruit smoothies, vegetables with cheese sauce, or sweetened fruit cups are all believed to be good choices. These children have no sense of the added fat or sugar they are consuming, only the benefits of the fruits and vegetables.
- Some children perceive fruits and vegetables as having no fat at all.
- Some children perceive fruits and vegetables to have no sugar at all. However, a couple of children noted that fruits “*grow their own sugar,*” which is perceived as harmless compared with the sugar in cake and candy.
- As healthy as fruits and vegetables are perceived to be, the role that they play in weight loss is not well-understood by children. In a child’s mind, eating more and more of anything—even if it is healthy— will add up and “*make you fat.*”

Children’s specific observations about nutritional issues include the following:

- All fat is bad.
- Vitamins help you “*not get fat.*”
- Some fruits and vegetables have “*calories that have no fat.*”
- Some kinds of fruits (especially really sweet ones) “*can get you fat.*”
- Carrots are good for eyesight.
- The seeds in some fruits have “*medicine*” in them.

Beliefs about nutrition seem to come from parents, teachers, and PSAs.

“My teacher says that, ‘a fruit a day will keep the doctor away.’”

However, some children believe they *“just know”* which foods are good for them. One little girl knows that carrots are healthy because God made them that way.

b. Physical Benefits of Eating Fruits and Vegetables

As with the older children, these children’s first line of thought in discussing the benefits of eating fruits and vegetables is generally related to physical health. Physical benefits, in turn, were discussed in the following ways.

- **Growth.** Several children focused on **growing** as aided by eating fruits and vegetables. They believe that eating right assists them in becoming *“big and strong”* as opposed to *“small and weak.”*
 - These children take growing very seriously, and some seemed to believe that without proper nutrition, they would become inferior adults. One pair of girls focused on how small, weak people would be unable to work as hard as healthy, strong people.
 - This perception seems equally strong for girls as for boys at this age.
 - These children agreed that teeth, eyesight, and bones are important areas of growth and health.

- **Athletic Performance** was another primary benefit of eating fruits and vegetables. Even children who were not particularly athletic in their interests spoke of running faster or winning the game. This suggests the influence of school or media programs in which athleticism and nutrition are paired. Specific benefits discussed include the following:
 - All of these children believe that fruit and vegetable consumption assists in *“making your muscles work better.”*

- Many believe that eating right can help them mentally focus and control their muscles when it's their turn to hit the ball or shoot the basket.
- Beliefs about how actual athletic ability is affected by nutrition are divided.
 - Some children believe that eating fruits and vegetables can actually make them win the race or the game or become a famous athlete.
 - A few others specifically expressed that this idea is silly. However, they did believe that they would never reach their full athletic potential without a proper diet.

“If you don’t eat [fruits and vegetables] it will make you sag.”

• **Staying healthy**—or more specifically, not getting sick—is also a perceived benefit of eating fruits and vegetables.

- Strength and health are often paired by these children. Healthy people are perceived as strong and able *“to do stuff.”* Further, sports examples are often used to illustrate what healthy and unhealthy children can do.

“[Healthy kids] can play soccer better.”

- “Not getting sick as much” is believed to be a valuable benefit of eating fruits and vegetables. However, no specific illnesses or frequencies of illness were mentioned.
- Dramatically, the only specific condition mentioned as resulting from lack of fruits and vegetables is death.

“Junk food will make you fatter and die quicker, but healthy food will make you live longer.”

- One boy believes that junk food can lead straight to death.

“All the junk food goes to your heart and it’s going to start pounding, and it’s going to be all rotten and stuff and you’ll die.”

— However, he believes that by eating fruits and vegetables, *“you won’t get fat and die.”*

- **Being the right size** is believed to be helped by eating properly. That is, children know that being too fat is bad for them, and they also believe that being too skinny is a sign of weakness and/or ill health.

“[If kids don’t eat fruits and vegetables] they don’t grow. They just stay skinny.”

It’s a Broccoli, It’s a Plantain, It’s ... Captain Vegetable!

The physical prowess enhanced by eating fruits and vegetables was inflated by a few children to the point of giving them superpowers.

“[The girl who eats all her fruits and vegetables] can be a superhero ... [she can] pick up a building ... and she flies.”

It seems that the children who voiced this perception had previously been exposed to the "5 A Day" advertising. This is supported by the superhero responses to the “Power Play” message that are discussed later in this report.

c. Mental/Intellectual Benefits of Eating Fruits and Vegetables

Somewhat secondary to the physical benefits, children listed the mental and scholastic benefits of eating fruits and vegetables.

“I like bananas because my teacher once told me that it turns on your brain.”

Much of the conversation about mental benefits discussed how “concentration” is helped by eating fruits and vegetables in contrast to the “hyper” state induced by eating “junk.”

- There is a belief that sugar impedes concentration.
- Being “hyper” seems to mean being both unable to sit still and slow to process information. For some of these children, it was a short leap from eating sugar to causing trouble in school.

“It makes you want to play, tell jokes ... and talk while you are in class ... And then your classmate says, ‘Stop it!’ then you’ll get them hyper and the whole class will turn around.”

“You are going to be hyper and then you have to go to school and be hyper. The teacher will make you go in the corner or you’ll get detention. “

- One child stated the belief that “sugar kills your brain cells” and concluded that “candy makes you dumber.”
- A couple of dyads suggested that a poor diet can be destructive almost to the point of retardation. In discussing a hypothetical girl who does not eat her fruits and vegetables, they stated that

“She plays very quiet ... She doesn’t talk right.”

d. Social/Emotional Benefits of Eating Fruits and Vegetables

Some of these children made the link between good nutrition and overall success in life with astonishing speed and clarity. They suggest that the virtue associated with eating fruits and vegetables will spread to other aspects of their lives and lead to general success in their endeavors. In a few instances, this idea extended

to virtues such as *“acting very loyal,” “happiness,”* and *“good imagination.”* One pair specifically believes that eating fruits and vegetables will help them make *“good choices”* in life *“like not smoking and stuff.”*

For some of these children, especially in L.A., the social benefits of good nutrition were described using negative examples. There is a belief that children who eat too much junk food and do not eat fruits and vegetables will grow up to be *“smokers,” “kidnappers,”* and *“gangsters.”*

Further, some of the physical and mental benefits mentioned earlier seem to have broader social and emotional implications.

- Frail, weak people are believed to be *“gloomy”* and depressed.
“They don’t feel good inside, they are not feeling like they are being woken up. “
- Children who act up in class and can’t concentrate on their schoolwork are perceived as being troublemakers and *“losers”* by the world at large.
- Weak people are expected to have less success in life because they do not have the energy to pursue their goals.

A few girls also mentioned their physical appearance as adults as a reason to eat well. One pair concluded that girls who eat right and *“get muscles”* early in life do so in part because *“they probably would want to look better when they are older.”*

e. Sensory Benefits of Eating Fruits

When discussing why they like their favorite fruits so much, these children became wonderfully visceral and sensory-oriented, focusing on the sweetness and the juiciness of the fruits and the pleasures of biting into them. Foods that are fun to eat, such as watermelon and (an exception among vegetables) corn on the cob were also discussed in sensory terms.

f. Comparison with 9-11 year-olds of Perceived Importance and Benefits

The research conducted with 9-11 year olds showed similar findings with respect to the perceived benefits of eating fruits and vegetables, with only a couple exceptions. The older children were also very aware of the importance of eating fruits and vegetables, focusing primarily on the physical, performance and health benefits, but they did not have the tendency to over-estimate the benefits to the extent that the younger children did. Perhaps consistent with this, the older children also did not tend to mention the social and emotional benefits (i.e., eating fruits and vegetables can make you a better, happier person) that the younger children discussed.

In the research with older children, the topic of benefits was taken a step further and discussed in the context of what would motivate them to eat *more* fruits and vegetables. In this context, the promise of more energy (interpreted to mean “energy to do a variety of physical activities better than they can now”) and increased strength (which they perceived to be similar to more energy) were compelling to girls. Boys also felt motivated by the promise of increased strength, as well as by doing better at sports, and growing. While not discussed in the same manner with the younger participants, given their focus on the physical benefits of consuming fruits and vegetables, it seems likely that the same messages that might motivate the older children could work with the younger children, too.

Benefits of Eating Fruits and Vegetables	
<u>6-8 year olds</u>	<u>9-11 year olds</u>
Physical – growth, athletic performance, staying healthy, being the right size	Physical – athletic performance, staying healthy, bone/teeth growth
Mental – brain power, concentration	Mental – brain power, scholastic performance
Social/emotional – be a better person, happier	Sensory (for fruit) – sweet, juicy, colorful
Sensory – sweet, juicy, fun	

3. Barriers to Ideal Fruit And Vegetable Consumption

As noted, fruits and vegetables are considered special or exceptional foods by these children. Eating fruits and vegetables is not an assumed or default position in their households. These children raised several issues in discussing why fruits and vegetables are not more easily and readily consumed in their homes and are the exception rather than the rule.

a. Sensory and Emotional Risk Aversion

These children view trying new fruits and vegetables as a big risk. This is clear from their visceral negative reactions when discussing their least favorite vegetables.

- *"Yucky"* was the word of choice to describe fruits and vegetables children disliked, and often facial expressions and whole body movements would accent the yuckiness of a particular food. The intensity of these reactions suggests that for these children, the experience of eating something unpleasant is quite dramatic and memorable.

"When I eat them they taste nasty because they have nasty stuff inside of them."

- Texture seems to be as important a component as flavor for children this age. Often *"yucky"* vegetables were described as *"mushy"* or *"too juicy"* or *"weird"* in texture. Foods commonly disliked based on texture include tomatoes, avocados, and mushrooms.
- Appearance seems to have an effect on the acceptability of some fruits and vegetables. One pair of girls rejected the idea of eating an avocado *"because it looks bumpy. ... and it looks like bugs around it."*

Not only is there a risk of having an unpleasant sensory experience, but there is a possibility of an unpleasant emotional experience as well in trying new foods. These children's belief that eating vegetables makes them good kids seems to

lead them to the idea that to try a vegetable and not want to eat it will make them a disappointment somehow. There is no clear resolution of how on the one hand, trying new foods makes children more grown-up and mature and will make adults proud of them, and on the other hand, there is a strong likelihood of ending up with something “*yucky*” in their mouths.

b. Forgetting How Good They Are

The sensory pleasure children take in the fruits and vegetables they do like seems to be undercut as a motivator to eating them by the exceptionalism of fruits and vegetables in these children’s diets. Because fruits and vegetables are not regular features in every meal or snack, children seem to forget how good they are to eat and so forget to ask for them or choose them for themselves.

- When going through the stack of pictures of various fruits and vegetables, it was as though children were sometimes surprised by the variety of things they like and the intensity with which they “*love them.*”
- It is possible that there are children who have tried the same fruit or vegetable “for the first time” more than once.

c. Parental Reinforcement of Good-Kid Beliefs

The perception that good kids eat their vegetables—whether they like them or not—is reported to be reinforced at home. Indeed, some of these children talked about eating vegetables the way they might talk about being brave for a booster shot: their parents will be proud and might even give them a reward.

This approach has the effect of reinforcing the idea that eating vegetables is not primarily for the purpose of delivering a positive sensory experience. This mindset seems to knock vegetables right out of the acceptable set of snack

options for many children and makes it a “*weird*” idea to ask for vegetables just because they taste good.

- Dessert and vegetables are played off against each other in several of these children’s homes. Getting dessert as a reward for finishing all the vegetables on the plate—or conversely, being denied dessert for not eating enough vegetables—is a practice that reinforces children’s perception of vegetables as something that must be consumed out of duty.
- A couple of children also suggested that they are made to eat vegetables whether they like them or not. That is, there are some vegetables that they **do** like and would eat, but they are expected to eat all the vegetables put in front of them. While this issue was not probed, it is possible that vegetables are among the few (or the only) food categories in which this happens. The result may be to taint the whole category with the memory of the “*yuckiest*” vegetable.

Fruit is a different matter altogether. Children seem to genuinely like fruit more and consider it a treat. It does not seem to have the same cloud of duty and bravery hovering over it as eating vegetables does.

Interestingly, while parents clearly still have a big influence over most 9-11 year olds, research with this older segment revealed that children do not think that “just” eating well will make their parents proud anymore; it needs to be something more significant such as getting good grades in school.)

d. Money/Access Restrictions

It is hard to be certain with children this age, what is perception and what is reality. However, there does seem to be some limitation on the consumption of fruits in particular—based on access.

- Some children reported that their moms limit the amount of fruit they can eat per day. There is a sense that since fruit is a treat, they have to *“make it last.”*
- Some of the children believe that fruits and vegetables are more expensive than other foods. Sometimes this idea was phrased as a hypothetical answer to why some children do not eat fruits and vegetables *“Because sometimes their parents ... probably don’t have enough money [so they eat] ... like cheaper stuff. Soups.”*
- One little boy said that his mother uses the cost of vegetables as an argument toward making him eat them all. *“When I don’t want to she makes me eat them because ... they are expensive so eat them.”*

However, a few children reported that they are allowed to reach into the fruit bowl whenever they want to *“without asking.”* This is in contrast to sugary or salty snacks that they have to get permission to take.

There may also be other access issues related to transportation or the selection in stores, but this was not made clear in these sessions.

e. Parental Attitudes and Limitations

There is some suggestion that among the adults in the households represented...

- Preparation of fruits and vegetables is less appealing and easy compared with convenience foods available. Some children’s food diaries reflected quite a number of convenience foods—such as microwavable meals and single-serving fruit cups—and take-out foods.
- The adults themselves may view eating fruits and vegetables as an exception rather than a default choice, and children are mimicking the behaviors they see modeled.

One other aspect of home life that can be extrapolated from children's comments is that some of them have not been exposed to a wide variety of fruits and vegetables. They were unable to identify some or most of the pictures of fruits and vegetables they were shown. Such a lack of variety is likely to contribute to a sense that the set of fruits and vegetables is small and the set that kids like to eat is even smaller.

"The ones that I don't eat is because my mom never even brings those home. My mom eats the oranges and peaches, but I've never had a peach."

An Incidental Observation About Parents

It is worth noting that as the moderator met children and parents prior to each interview, she observed that almost all of the mothers she met appeared somewhat to severely overweight. While it is risky to draw conclusions from this casual observation, it does suggest that further research should strongly consider the eating and exercise behaviors modeled at home.

f. Comparison with 9-11 year-olds of Perceived Barriers

Perceived sensory issues appear to be some of the more significant reasons both 6-8 and 9-11 year olds do not eat more fruits and vegetables. They think of them as having a bad taste, texture, smell, and even appearance. One of the bigger reasons that 9-11 year olds do not consume more fruits and vegetables is subtle, and not so subtle, peer pressure; this does not yet seem to be a factor with the younger children. While the younger children talk about disappointing their parents when they don't like a new fruit or vegetable, the older children seem more concerned about what their friends will think or say if they do eat these items. Both segments discuss the various access and preparation barriers, although with older children, because of their enhanced independence, these include self-focused barriers in addition to the primarily parental-driven barriers experienced by the younger children.

Barriers to Eating Fruits and Vegetables	
<u>6-8 year olds</u>	<u>9-11 year olds</u>
Sensory risks – “yucky” taste and/or texture, ugly appearance	Sensory issues – bad taste, smell and/or texture, ugly appearance, don't “go” with rest of meal
Emotional risk – disappointment if they don't like something they try	Emotional/social risk – fear peers will laugh/tease them, just don't care about eating them
Forget how good they are	Preparation/access issues – parents don't serve or eat them, or don't purchase what kids like, kids don't buy f/v themselves, not as easy to prepare as “junk” food, cost
Adverse reaction to parental pressure	
Cost/access restrictions – parents not serving or not serving much variety, convey they are expensive	

B. Real Life and the Damper on Desire

Regarding active play, these children have one clear message: they want MORE—not only because it is good for them, but mostly because it’s fun. Unlike with foods, there is virtually no resistance on the part of children to the idea of going outside to run around and play. Instead, **the resistance comes from the world around them.**

If the decision were entirely left up to children, active, outdoor play would actually be a default position. However, the environment they live in is pushing it toward becoming an exceptional occurrence.

While this topic was not discussed in the same depth with the older children, there appears to be a significant difference here. While the older children liked physical activity, they clearly enjoyed, and often preferred, more sedate activities, too, like watching television, playing video games and “sitting around” with friends.

1. Defining Terms

These children often differentiated between exercise and “*running around outside.*” The message is that exercise is work, and play is play, and some kinds of play give you exercise in the bargain.

As with the older children, at the mention of the word **exercise**, most of these younger children began miming working out with weights or doing jumping jacks. Exercise is associated with going to the gym, P.E. class, and working out to lose weight.

- Exercise is considered somewhat less pleasant and definitely more regimented than playing. Some children also indicated that exercising is a more grown-up activity than playing.
- In L.A., the children had particularly specific vocabularies related to exercise. They discussed “*spinning*,” “*Tae-Bo*,” and people having abdominal muscles like “*six-packs*.”

The term **active play** was interpreted by most of these children to mean playing outside and engaging in some sort of strenuous activity such as doing a sport, riding bikes, or playing tag.

- However, a couple of pairs of girls interpreted active play to mean indoor imaginative play, such as dress-up, Barbies, or Princesses. It is possible that the word “Active” translated to “Acting” for these girls.
- A few children did not offer an interpretation because they did not know what the word “Active” means.

Power play was generally defined as being especially strenuous, intense outside play. Some children associated it specifically with sports and more formalized exercise.

- The idea of getting power from exercise made sense to most of these children. Building muscle and stamina by working their bodies was a familiar idea.

“One time I was with my aunt, and I was running. I ran eight miles and it gave me a lot of power. My thighs felt strong.”
- A few children associated power play with having superpowers, like super strength or being able to fly.
 - Some believed that power playing could lead them to develop superpowers eventually.
 - Others associated the phrase Power Play with superpowers but found the idea ridiculous that playing can make a kid a superhero.

- One pair of boys thought that it meant running around playing Batman and Robin.
- One pair of girls interpreted power play as being a good person.

(Neither “active play” nor “power play” were discussed in the groups with older children.)

“**Get up and play**” was interpreted as rude or an indication of parental annoyance by the 6-8 year olds. When asked who might tell them to get up and play, it was usually an adult seeking some quiet or privacy—“*so [we] won’t bug them.*” When discussed in one group of older boys, they tended to think it sounded like fun, and that it could refer to a variety of both physical and more sedate activities.

Other variations on these terms that tended to communicate to the 9-11 year olds the kind of activity that would get their heart beating faster included “**be active**” and “**be physically active,**” however, the term “physical” did not seem age-appropriate and caused some confusion.

The **60 minutes a day/1 hour a day** message received a wide variety of responses.

- Interpretation was dependent to some extent on children’s knowledge of time.
 - Several children believed that 60 minutes was somewhat less or much less than an hour.
 - Some understood that 60 minutes and an hour are the same thing.
- Reaction was also divided.
 - Some children believe they already get at least 60 minutes of outside play a day, and they would really like more. A few children believe that when school is out, they play outside up to four hours a day.

- Others think an hour would be just right—whether they currently have it or not.
- A few children found the idea of an 60 minutes/1 hour’s active play to be overwhelming. It seemed to them that whoever wrote the statement was practically trying to kill them.

“Heck no [I wouldn’t run around and play for 60 minutes] ... That means they want to give you asthma.”

- Most of the 9-11 year olds knew on a rational level that these two terms meant the same thing, but were fairly split as to which “sounded” easier to accomplish.

2. Benefits of Active Play

a. Physical Benefits

The physical benefits of active play are perceived similarly to the benefits of healthy eating. Children believe they will grow better, be stronger, be better athletes, and resist diseases.

The negative consequences of lack of active play were also similar: laziness, lack of energy, poor performance in sports. Higher order issues in this instance included not having friends and not *“feeling like you can do stuff.”*

Some of these children noted a benefit of outdoor play separate from the exercise benefits. The idea of getting *“fresh air”* and having *“air in your lungs”* during outside play is believed to have strong health benefits. The implication is that if children stay inside too much, the air in their lungs gets stale.

“Well sometimes you feel like you just have to go outside because you need more air.”

“I want to get stronger ... So I go outside and get my power from the fresh air outside instead of the hot air inside.”

b. Social and Emotional Benefits

The social and emotional benefits of active play are distinctive.

- Quite simply, the joy these children take in being able to play outside is palpable. It is as though they are not fulfilling their role as children unless they are playing outside.
- These children automatically associate playing outside with playing with friends, whereas inside play is generally solitary.

- There is a strong association between playing outside and improving at sports. Many of these children—especially the boys—place a lot of their self-esteem in their sports prowess.
- They feel freer outside to run around and be physical. When playing inside, they have to be careful not to “*break stuff.*”
- Outside play is believed to be a cure for being “*hyper,*” thus leading to better concentration and focus once children are back inside.

“[By] running around I am getting all this energy out of me.”
“When you are hyper, you want to go play outside and get rowdy.”
- In its own way, outside play is imaginative play. These children described made-up games or unusual rules for familiar games that they play outside.

“[I play] Crash, like me and him is playing the Crash game and he crashes into me then I have to go into him and he has to go after me, like tag.”

3. Barriers to Outdoor Play

These children are so enthusiastic about playing outside that they really need no motivation other than their own desire. However, the barriers standing in their way are formidable.

The key barrier is **safety**. Only a few children reported ever being allowed to play outside by themselves, and even in those instances, their play is restricted to their own backyard or apartment complex. These children accept these restrictions because the bad things they have been told about are truly frightening for them.

Kidnapping, or being “*snatched,*” came up as the primary fear in all of the dyads. These children have heard news stories—and in some instances know firsthand—about children who have been snatched off the street. This came up in the Sacramento groups with 9-11 year olds, too.

- Their understanding of what actually happens in a kidnapping vary, but they all associate terrible things with kidnapping, from missing their families to being raped.
- One boy associated being kidnapped with not being able to grow up.

“At night time your mom doesn’t want you to go outside because she doesn’t know where you are. Someone can kidnap you ... I want my life ... I want to have kids, I want to have a wife and everything.”

Since these children cannot play outside safely by themselves, a related barrier is finding an adult to provide **supervision**.

- They report that their parents are often too tired or too busy to go outside with them.
- When parents do go outside with their children, there is a sense that it is often for organized play or outings—such as baseball games or trips to a water park—rather than for unregulated kid play.
- Sometimes older siblings are entrusted to watch the younger children, but it seems these siblings must be at least 12 years old for parents to feel comfortable.
- A few children reported being allowed to play outside unsupervised, but the frequency and limitations of this play are unclear.

The social nature of outside play means that for some of these children, **not having friends around** is perceived as a barrier. These children strongly believe that outside play by themselves is a lot less fun—and less active—than playing with others. Also, it is possible that parents relax a little on the safety issue when their children are playing with friends.

Other barriers mentioned include bad weather (or too hot weather in L.A.), being sick, or being restricted as part of a punishment.

While just briefly touched upon in last fall’s groups with older children, the top-of-mind barriers in that age group are more focused on lack of initiative and

preference than on the barriers discussed here for the younger children. Older children mention: being lazy, preferring to “sit around” (playing videos, working on the computer or watching television), not thinking that exercise is very helpful, a lack of confidence that they can exercise, and being tired.

C. Reactions to Communication Materials

A number of issues arose when reviewing the poster and the commercials that signal opportunities for future communication development. *(These communication materials were not discussed in the groups with older children, although some of the general concepts, as noted below, were.)*

1. The "5 A Day" Concept

As with the 9-11 year olds, the "5 A Day" phrase was already familiar to some of these younger children. Most had seen "5 A Day" materials at school or on television.

The phrase "5 A Day" was first associated with fruits and vegetables. Most children interpreted this idea as meaning *"eat 5 fruits and vegetables a day."* However, as with the older children, it is not clear whether these children—prior to seeing the poster or commercials—were thinking about five servings or five pieces.

- One boy seemed to think that by eating five pieces of fruit or vegetable a day—five grapes or five baby carrots—he was fulfilling his quota.
- Another boy thought it meant one a day for five days each week.

"5 A Day Power Play" was interpreted variously, although most children understood the general theme.

- Some believed that it meant eat 5 fruits and vegetables a day and play actively outside.
- A few thought it meant play outside five times a week.

2. Commercials

In general, reactions to the commercials were positive. Prior familiarity ranged from children who had never seen them before to children who were mouthing the words along with the characters. Children in Sacramento demonstrated substantially sharper awareness of the advertising than did children in L.A.

a. Appeal

All of these children were enthusiastic about the commercials to varying degrees. None of these children strongly disliked them.

- The talking vegetables were popular with these children. They found them funny and colorful.
- The joke about “a peel” was singled out as a positive feature even if children weren’t sure they understood it.
- The “I’m outta here” line at the end was also funny for these children.
- There seemed to be some enjoyment of the boy being lectured by the fruits and vegetables.

b. Interpretation

Overall, the main message was interpreted as “*eat five fruits and vegetables a day.*” Again, the idea of what constitutes a serving seems less than clear for these children, even when they played back the words.

- The line “ditch that soda” resonated with these children and was often repeated, as was the line about “greasy chips.”
- The idea that children can get stronger and healthier by eating five fruits and vegetables a day was also clear to these children.

“It’s so easy” was interpreted to mean it is easy to eat five fruits and vegetables a day. However, further exploration yielded multiple interpretations including that...

- It is easy to eat fruit *“because people like it, yeah instead of vegetables because some people don’t like vegetables a lot.”*
- It is easy to give up junk food.
- Fruits and vegetables are easy to bite.

Generally, the “it’s so easy” message and the commercial itself was beneficial for motivating kids to eat 5 servings of fruits and vegetables – but it did little to communicate or reinforce the “physical activity” aspect of the “5 A Day” message. When we probed on this issue, we sensed that the “energy” and “active play” benefits that kids naturally associate with fruits and vegetables could easily be included in this commercial simply by showing the child “dumping baskets” and having fun after eating his/her healthy snack.

3. Poster

In general, the poster received a positive response and was interpreted as meaning that children should eat five fruits and vegetables and exercise each day. The sports association was strong for these children, so that with the poster, they associated the benefits of the “5 A Day” message with athletic performance.

The Power Up idea was associated with energy, strength, and speed.

- Some children interpreted it as meaning if they eat their fruits and vegetables, they will have the desire and the energy to go out and play sports.
- Others took a slightly different tack and believed that it means exercising will give them power.

III. RECOMMENDATIONS

This research suggests that there are limited opportunities to further hone the "5 A Day" message for 6-8 year old low-income children.

- The **basic** messages of the campaign appear to be understood and well received by children this age.
 - Young children accept the idea that eating fruits and vegetables and engaging in regular active play are good for them.
 - They display no cynicism or sense of “cool” that acts as a barrier to acceptance of the message.
- However, as positive as these messages are to them, the fact is that very few young children in this research actually engaged in the desired amount of behavior (this was especially true with regard to eating the recommended servings of f/v a day). This dichotomy suggests that the message is not as highly motivating as it could be to this age group and/or that unexplored barriers could be working against these motivators.
- **Specifically, a key barrier for this age group may lie, to some extent, with parental control. As we saw, children this age have relatively little control (less than older kids) over the foods they choose or their play schedules, so their ability to act on the positive messages they receive is limited.**
 - Conducting research among parents with the goal of understanding what needs to be done to get parental buy-in for the "5 A Day" message is critical in changing children’s habits and behaviors.
 - Exploring parental habits to discover the eating and exercise behaviors modeled at home is also crucial.

A possible model for further consideration is the “default/exception” model that arose in this research.

- Currently, eating fruits and vegetables is an exception rather than an accepted part of every meal. The "5 A Day" campaign should seek to find the fulcrum that would tip fruits and vegetables into the category of default food choices that are an expected part of every meal. Several issues would need to be addressed including...
 - Kids’ perception of vegetables as nutritionally beneficial but not especially pleasurable compared with other foods (even fruits).
 - Kids’ perception of fruits and vegetables as “energy” food that makes them “strong” and able to excel in sports and outdoor activities is a natural motivator and clearly links the two behaviors. Indeed, this research supports the idea that the “energy” message is key in helping not only to motivate both behaviors but in helping to play up the quantity (5 a day, one hour a day) element of the campaign.
 - A possible perception among parents that vegetables are expensive and/or difficult to prepare compared with other foods.
 - Parents’ own attitudes toward the variety of vegetables they will eat—and how willingly.
 - Parent education on how to present fruits and vegetables to children so that eating them is not considered a duty or a punishment.
- Outdoor play—while it is clearly the intense preference of these children—is in danger of becoming an exception rather than a default because of parents’ (and children’s) safety concerns. As possible, the "5 A Day" campaign might consider...
 - Partnering with local law enforcement and community policing organizations to create a “safe hour” after school and on weekends where available adults and police patrols agree to be an obvious presence in neighborhoods.

- A campaign aimed at parents and designed to increase children’s enrollment in free or low-cost neighborhood athletics.
- Forming a “my yard” program in which one or two parents per block agree to be at home after school for one hour so neighborhood children have a supervised play space. A small stipend could be offered to these parents to purchase fresh fruit or juice as snacks.

At this age, children’s desire to be perceived as “good kids” creates an opportunity for the "5 A Day" program to tailor its communications.

- These children associate not eating fruits and vegetables—and especially eating too much junk food—with extreme behaviors such as smoking and being in a gang. The association of good nutrition and exercise with children’s aspirations to be “good” (and not “bad”) is an avenue to explore.
- All of these children perceive themselves as “good kids” who try their best to eat right and be active even when their diaries and their appearance suggest the contrary. The campaign should be cautious in making negative messages too direct.
 - Approaches such as “there once was a boy who...” are preferable to direct discussions of children’s weight or diets.
 - Letting children know that someone understands that the best foods are not always in the house and that it isn’t their fault is an avenue to consider. Teaching children strategies for asking their parents for healthier foods or more time outside should be explored as well.

The current "5 A Day" materials, including the commercials, are fun and effectively communicate to these children. Continuation on a path of lightness, humor, characters, and bright colors is recommended. However, the “5” part of the "5 A Day" message could use clarification and end-benefit reinforcement.

- Children currently seem to believe that eating any fruits and vegetables makes them good kids. The message should be reinforced that while *some* fruits and vegetables each day is good, eating *more* is better.
- Some children were confused about whether "5 A Day" meant 5 pieces or bites, 5 servings, or one a day for 5 days. Clarification that you are speaking of a "serving" and of what constitutes a serving is crucial. None of these children expressed a clear understanding of what a serving is. The idea of a serving might actually be useful in encouraging and praising children regarding fruit and vegetable consumption.
 - Some sort of focus on "the last bite" might help to diminish the idea that eating any of a vegetable is enough.
 - Children should be made aware that when they eat their favorite fruits and vegetables, they may well be eating two or three servings at a time. This does not necessarily have to be addressed in the copy, and may be even stronger if it is visually communicated.
- The **connection** between the healthful benefits of eating fruits and vegetables and being physically active needs to be made stronger. While children this age do not need a lot of inducement to exercise, the natural connection they see between healthy eating and achieving a strong physical body could actually be used as an additional reinforcement for both behaviors.

APPENDIX:
STUDY SCREENER
AND
DISCUSSION GUIDE

KID SCREENER – v4		
Parent _____	Home # _____	
Child (participant) _____	Work # _____	
Address _____	City/State _____	
Date _____	Recruiter _____	
1. Girl/Boy and age _____	Interview	
2. Ethnicity _____	date/time:	

Hello, my name is _____ and I'm calling from _____. We are conducting a study in your area about the kinds of foods children like to eat and we would like to include your child's opinions. May I speak to an adult responsible for the children in your household? I assure you that we will not try to sell you anything as this is strictly for market research purposes. May I ask you a few questions to make sure that we get a good mix of people?

1a. How many people, including adults and children, live in your household?

_____ **Record number stated and refer to this for Q3c.**

1b. Do you have any children between the ages of 6 and 8 living at home?

No **TERMINATE**
 Yes **CONTINUE**

1c. And what are the ages, genders and school grades (if they were in school this past year) of any children between the ages of 6 and 8 you have living at home?

<u>Age</u>	<u>Boy/Girl</u>	<u>Grade</u>
_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____

Must have child age 6-8 years, in K-2nd grade, living at home.

Recruit equal mix of 6, 7 and 8 year olds and boys/girls over the course of the two days.

2a. We are speaking to people in a variety of occupations. Are you or any member of your immediate family or household currently employed or been employed in the past in any of the following types of companies or industries? **(READ)**

	<u>Yes</u>	<u>No</u>
Health care professional such as a doctor, nurse, registered dietician or other expert in child health or nutrition	1	2
Company that produces fruits or vegetables	1	2

If yes to any of the above, TERMINATE.

2b. If you work outside the home, what is your occupation and that of any other adults living at home? Please include job title, company name and industry.

Mom
 Title: _____ Company: _____ Industry: _____

Dad/other
 Title: _____ Company: _____ Industry: _____

No one who works in healthcare or for a company that produces fruits or vegetables.

3a. Does your child receive free or reduced-price school meals?

Yes **Skip to Q4a**
 No **Continue**
 Unsure **Continue**

3b. Does your child qualify for free or reduced-price school meals?

Yes **Skip to Q4a**
 No **TERMINATE**
 Unsure **Continue**

3c. Which of the following includes your annual household income?

Under \$22,000	1	Continue
\$22,001 - \$27,800	3	Continue if 3 or more people in household, otherwise, TERMINATE
\$27,801 - \$33,500	4	Continue if 4 or more people in household, otherwise, TERMINATE
\$33,501 - \$39,200	5	Continue if 5 or more people in household, otherwise, TERMINATE
\$39,201 - \$44,900	6	Continue if 6 or more people in household, otherwise, TERMINATE
\$44,901 - \$50,600	7	Continue if 7 or more people in household, otherwise, TERMINATE
\$50,601 - \$56,300	8	Continue if 8 or more people in household, otherwise, TERMINATE
Above \$56,301	9	Continue if 9 or more people in household, otherwise, TERMINATE
DO NOT READ	Refused	TERMINATE

These questions will ensure that participants are from low-income households. Household income must be no more than 185% of the national poverty level. Refer to Q1a for number of people in household. For households with more than 10 members, add an additional \$5,700 per person to the maximum income level.

4. To ensure we have a broad cross-section of people in the discussion, please tell me which of the following categories best describes your child's race or ethnic background? Is he/she . . . **(READ)**

Caucasian	1	Continue
Black/African American	2	Continue
Hispanic/Latino	3	Continue
Asian/Pacific Islander	4	Continue
Native American	5	TERMINATE
Part of some other racial group	6	Specify: _____
DO NOT READ	Refused	TERMINATE

Recruit mix : out of 30 children (15 pairs) recruit 10 Caucasian, 6 African American, 10 Latino, and 4 Asian/Pacific Islanders over the two days (Do not have to be same ethnicity in a pair) CHECK QUOTAS.

5. Is your (6-8) year old fluent in English?

Yes **Continue**
No **TERMINATE**

6a. Is your (6-8) year old on any special diet or does he/she have any dietary restrictions?

Yes **TERMINATE**
No **Continue**

Kids are not on any special diets or have any dietary restrictions (i.e., Kosher, Halal, etc.) that would dictate what kind of food they can eat.

6b. Does your child have any disabilities that prevent him/her from participating in physical activities?

Yes **TERMINATE**
No **Continue**

7a. We are looking for children to participate in a market research study about food and want to make sure that your child will be comfortable and have fun participating in a project like this. Has your child ever participated in a market research group discussion or one-on-one interview before?

No 1 **SKIP TO Q8a**
Yes 2 **CONTINUE**

7b. What was/were the subject(s) of the research group discussion(s) or one-on-one interview(s) in which he/she has participated? (**ASK FOR ALL**)

No market research ever on health/nutrition/exercise issues. Prefer no food groups at all.

7c. When was the last time he/she participated in a market research discussion or interview?

If within the past six months, TERMINATE.

8. Please rate your child on each of the following statements using a scale of 1-5, where 5 means you strongly agree and 1 means you strongly disagree. Would you say your son/daughter . . .

- A. would feel comfortable participating in a discussion with another child or two his/her age for 45 minutes or so _____ **Terminate if 1 or 2**
B. usually has an opinion on any subject and can express that opinion freely _____ **Terminate if 1 or 2**
C. is usually shy with adults he/she does not know _____ **Terminate if 4 or 5**

9. With your permission, I would like to speak to your son/daughter about this study. If he/she qualifies and would like to participate in a market research interview here in our offices to discuss his/her opinions about different kinds of food, will he/she be able to attend a 60-minute discussion on (*date*) at (*time*) o'clock? If he/she qualifies, he/she would receive (**INSERT CO-OP**) for

his/her cooperation. If he/she is available to come to the phone right now, I would like to ask him/her a couple questions.

- Yes 1⇒CONTINUE WITH
CHILD INTERVIEW
No..... 2⇒SCHEDULE CALL BACK
Not willing to participate..... 3⇒THANK & DISCONTINUE

READ: You may listen on an extension if you wish, and I would like to speak to you again after I've talked to your son/daughter.

Child Screener

Hi, my name is _____ and I'm calling from a research company. I've been speaking with your mom/dad and he/she said it was okay for me to ask you a few questions, too. These questions are easy because there are no wrong answers. Okay?

10. What is your name? _____

11. How old are you? _____

12a. What is your favorite kind of food? _____

12b. What do you like about (FOOD THEY JUST MENTIONED)?

13a. What kind of food don't you like? _____

13b. What don't you like about (FOOD THEY JUST MENTIONED)?

14. What kinds of games do you like to play – either alone or with your friends? (*Probe*) How do you play that? When you go to the park or playground, what do you like to do there?

15a. DO NOT READ: Is child articulate and understandable and does he/she appear to enjoy expressing herself?

- Yes CONTINUE
No SKIP Q15b and speak to parent again, thank, and then TERMINATE

Note to recruiter: probe to determine child’s ability to respond articulately and comfortably to all questions. Child must be able to express him/herself well without shyness and without speech or language difficulties. Otherwise, terminate.

If shy, very soft-spoken, or doesn’t seem to want to participate in this project, please do not recruit. Please fill out completely for moderator’s review.

15b. Would you like to bring a friend of yours and come to a fun discussion at our offices to talk more about the kinds of foods you like and don’t like?

No 1 **TERMINATE (after speaking to parent again)**
Yes 2

Great. Thanks! May I speak to your mom/dad again?

WHEN PARENT GETS BACK ON PHONE, IF CHILD DOES NOT QUALIFY, READ:

Thank you for allowing us to talk with (NAME OF CHILD) today. Although he/she does not qualify for this particular research study, we will keep his/her name in our files and will call again when something new comes up. Thanks again!

Child Invitation for a 1-hour Dyad

Thank you for allowing us to talk with (NAME OF CHILD) today. For this study on children’s food preferences, we are conducting interviews with children and their friends, so if (NAME OF CHILD) has a friend who would like to participate, too, I would like to invite them to participate in an interview on (INSERT DATE) at (INSERT TIME). The entire session will last approximately one hour and for his/her participation each child will receive (\$), plus an extra (\$) if he/she completes two small projects before coming to the discussion, for a total of (\$).

We are inviting only a small number of children to be a part of this study, so his/her opinions and participation are very important to us. Many children like to participate in market research studies like this because adults listen to and are very interested in their opinions and it makes the child feel important. This study is confidential, and information about your child will not be disclosed.

Does this sound like something that (NAME OF QUALIFYING CHILD) would be interested in participating in?

Yes1⇒CONTINUE
No.....2⇒THANK & DISCONTINUE

If Yes:

Great! The discussion will be held _____ (name/address) _____. We will send you a letter confirming the time of the discussion, as well as the address, telephone number and a map showing you the exact location. As I mentioned, there are two things we would like (NAME OF CHILD) to do at home before coming to the discussion and in order to receive the extra (\$).

HOMEWORK:

1. We would like him/her to keep a one-day food diary. Please help your child write down everything he/she eats for one whole day before the interview. Start with the first food he/she eats in the day, until right before he/she goes to bed. Include the time of day, what was eaten, how much, and who decided what would be eaten (your child, you, a teacher, etc.)

2. **(RECRUITER, PLEASE ASSIGN HALF THE PAIRS “PHYSICAL ACTIVITY” AND THE OTHER HALF “FRUITS AND VEGETABLES”)** **READ:** The second thing we would like him/her to do is to make a collage or drawing that shows how he/she feels about eating fruits and vegetables. He/she can cut pictures out of magazines, draw, use real photographs or whatever he/she prefers. **(THE OTHER PAIRS SHOULD BE ASKED TO:** Please have your child make a collage or drawing that shows how he/she feels about physical activity and active play. He/she can cut pictures out of magazines, draw, use real photographs or whatever he/she prefers.

Will he/she be able to do these two things before he/she comes to the discussion and bring the projects with him/her? He/she will be asked to leave the pictures with the woman leading the discussion, so, if possible, please make sure they are not pictures that he/she wants to get back. **(Please get parent to agree to this request.)**

If you have any questions prior to the discussion, or you discover that your child will be unable to attend, please do not hesitate to call _____ at _____. Someone from our offices will call you again prior to the day of the group to confirm your attendance.

If your child wears glasses for reading or watching television, please have him/her bring them to the discussion.

Continued on next page...

(RECRUIT FRIEND FOR “FRIENDSHIP PAIR”)

We would like to invite your child to bring a friend to this discussion so they can participate together. Can you tell us the name and telephone number of one or more friends of **(NAME OF QUALIFYING CHILD)** who are also **(AGE OF QUALIFYING CHILD)** and who might enjoy participating in this discussion?

Friend #1

Name: _____

Telephone: _____

Friend #2

Name: _____

Telephone: _____

Food Discussion
Kid Dyads

Dates: 6/19-20 in LA and 6/26-27 in Sacramento

Plan for each city:

- Day One: eight 1-hour friendship pairs. Tentative times: 10-11, 11-12, 12-1, 1-hour break, 2-3, 3-4, 4-5, 30-minute break, 5:30-6:30, 6:30-7:30
- Day Two: seven 1-hour friendship pairs. Tentative times: 11-12, 12-1, 1-2, 1-hour break, 3-4, 4-5, 30-minute break, 5:30-6:30, 6:30-7:30

Recruiting Specifications

- All age 6-8 years and in K-2nd grades (recruit equal mix of 6, 7 and 8 year olds over the 2 days)
- Equal mix boys and girls over the 2 days
- Mixed ethnicity; out of 30 children (15 pairs) recruit 10 Caucasian, 6 African American, 10 Latino, and 4 Asian/Pacific Islanders over the two days (do not have to be same ethnicity in a pair)
- Come from low-income households of no higher than 185% of the federal poverty level (see attached sheet for specifics.)
- Friends recruited for friendship-pairs must each meet the outlined specifications, although we may make exceptions for a friend who doesn't quite meet all the specs but still overall is a good fit.
- Kids are not on any special diets or food restrictions (i.e., Kosher, Halal, etc.)
- Kids do not have disabilities that prevent them from participating in physical activities
- Child fluent in English and willing to express opinions
- Parents not employed by company that produces fruit or vegetables, nor are they a doctor/nurse or expert in child nutrition/health
- No market research participation in the past 6 months. None ever on health/nutrition/exercise issues.

185% Federal Poverty Level
Effective May 1, 2002 to June 30, 2003

Gross Income				
# of persons in Family Unit	Annual	Monthly	Weekly	Hourly
1	\$16,391	\$1,366	\$315	\$7.88
2	\$22,089	\$1,841	\$425	\$10.62
3	\$27,787	\$2,316	\$534	\$13.36
4	\$33,485	\$2,791	\$644	\$16.10
5	\$39,183	\$3,266	\$754	\$18.84
6	\$44,881	\$3,741	\$863	\$21.58

7	\$50,579	\$4,215	\$973	\$24.32
8	\$56,277	\$4,690	\$1,082	\$27.06
8+	\$5,700 per added family member	\$475 per added family member	\$110 per added family member	\$2.74 per added family member

Income information at 185% of federal poverty level

MODERATOR'S GUIDE
STRATEGY EXPLORATORY
45-60 minute "Friendship Pairs"
June 2003
Revised 6/19/03

Objectives:

- To better understand how to effectively communicate with low-income 6-8 year-olds to increase their fruit and vegetable consumption and physical activity levels.
 - to learn their reactions to, and comprehension of, various 5 A Day and competitive campaign materials to determine if the messaging and/or approach will work with this younger age group
 - to assess what is/are motivating end-benefits
 - to explore reactions to various ways of talking about "physical activity"
 - to uncover any relevant gender differences

I. Introduction/Purpose/Warm-up (5 minutes)

A. Brief intro, disclosures and explanation of study:

- To understand what you think about different kinds of foods and what you like to do for fun and exercise

B. Warm-up/Background on child

- Age, school, grade, ages of siblings
- What are you going to do this summer?

Note: We will spend more time on f/v in pairs that did f/v collage, and more on activity in pairs that did exercise collage.

II. General Discussion of Food (10 minutes)

A. Likes/Dislikes

1. What are some of your favorite foods? What makes those so good?
2. What are some foods you really don't like? What makes those so bad?

B. Food diary

1. Tell me about the food you ate the day you kept track of it.
2. When did you eat? What did you eat?
3. Who decided what you were going to eat? What was your part, what was Mom's part in deciding?
4. How did this day compare to a regular day? Anything different about this day?

C. Fruits & Veggies

1. I want to talk about certain kinds of foods, like these: *(Bring out pictures of various fruits, like apples, oranges, pears, strawberries, etc.)*
 - ♦ What are these? *(probe awareness levels)* Which of these do you ever eat? *(probe: When? How often? What situations?)* What are your favorite fruits (even if not pictured here)? Least favorites?
2. *(Bring out pictures of various vegetables, like broccoli, corn, lettuce, cucumbers, green beans, etc.)*

- ♦ What are these? (*probe awareness levels*) Which of these do you ever eat? (*Probe: When? How often? What situations?*) Which are your favorite vegetables (even if not pictured here)? Least favorites?
- 3 *Time permitting: (Compare fruits and veggies)* If you had to pick between all of these foods, which ones do you like the best? The least? Why? What do your favorite ones have in common? What do your least favorite ones have in common? (*Move on if they can't answer this.*)

III. F&V Barriers/Motivators Discussion (5-12 minutes)

- A. Collages (*ask only for the pairs assigned to "Fruits and Vegetables", Otherwise skip to Part B.*)
1. Tell me about the collages you made. How do you feel about eating fruits and vegetables? (*Probe to understand pictures and images selected to go on the collage*) What does this collage tell us about how you feel about fruits and vegetables?
 2. (*Compare and contrast the two collages*) How are these two collages alike? How are they different? What do they tell us about how kids your age feel about eating fruits and vegetables?
- B. Card Sort
1. (*Start with motivators, then do barriers.*) I'm going to read you some reasons that some kids have told me why they like (don't like) to eat a lot of fruits and vegetables. As I read them, we're going to sort them into 3 piles: In pile 1 we'll put the reasons that you agree with completely (you feel exactly the same way). In pile 2 we'll put the reasons that you agree with a little bit (you sort of feel that way, but not completely). In pile 3, we'll put the reasons that you don't agree with at all (you don't feel that way at all).
 2. Are there any other reasons you can think of why kids would want to eat fruits and vegetables? (*List each additional motivation mentioned on a card*) Are there any other reasons you can think of why kids would not want to eat fruits and vegetables? (*List each additional barrier mentioned on a card*).

(*For each new reason added, ask*) And how strongly do you agree or disagree with this reason for wanting/not wanting to eat fruits and vegetables. (*Sort remaining cards into the three piles*)
 3. *After statements are sorted into piles, sort through pile 1 and ask kids:*
 - Which of these is the most important reason why kids should eat more fruits and vegetables? (*Probe: Which would convince you the most that eating fruits and vegetables is a really good thing to do?*)
 - Which of these is the most important reason why kids your age don't like to or aren't able to eat as much fruits and vegetables as they should? (*Probe: Which of these is the most important reason why you don't eat more fruits and vegetables?*)

IV. Physical Activity (10-18 minutes)

I want to switch gears for a minute and talk about something different than food.

A. Habits/Opinions re: physical activity

1. What kinds of things do you like to do when you're not in school?
3. Which of these things do you do most often/least often? Which are most fun/easy? Least fun/hard to do? Why?
4. *If only sedentary things are mentioned, probe for more physical activities.*
3. *Time permitting:* Who decides how you spend your free time when you're not in school?
 - What's your part/your mom's part in deciding?
 - How much of your free time is "structured" (i.e. doing sports, after-school programs, etc.) vs. unstructured? Which of those times/situations are you more likely to be physically active/moving around a lot? Why?
4. Tell me a story of the last time you were physically active (*use term they are using*) for more than 10-15 minutes. Where were you? Who were you with? What were you doing? Who's decision was it? Did you have fun? Why/why not? What would have made it better for you?

B. Collages (*ask only for the pairs assigned to do "Physical Activity" Collages", Otherwise skip to C*)

1. Tell me about the collages you made. What does it mean to be physically active? (*Probe other terms such as: exercise, active play, etc.?*) How do you feel about being physically active/getting exercise? What does this mean to you? (*Probe to understand pictures and images selected to go on the collage*) What does this collage tell us about how you feel about being physically active, getting plenty of exercise?
2. (*Compare and contrast the two collages*) How are these two collages alike? How are they different? What do they tell us about how kids your age feel about being physically active/getting plenty of exercise?

C. Barriers to/Motivators of physical activity

1. (*Start with motivators, then do barriers.*) Just like we did before, I'm going to read you some reasons that some kids have told me why they like to (or don't like to) run around or exercise a lot. As I read them, we're going to sort them into 3 piles: In pile 1 we'll put the reasons that you agree with completely (you feel exactly the same way). In pile 2 we'll put the reasons that you agree with a little bit (you sort of feel that way, but not completely). In pile 3, we'll put the reasons that you don't agree with at all (you don't feel that way at all).
2. What are some other reasons you can think of why kids don't run around or exercise much? What keeps kids from being more physically active (*or their term*)? (*Add to list of barriers*) And what are some other reasons that some kids do run around and get lots of exercise? What are some things that encourage kids to be more physically active? (*Add to list of motivations*)

(For each new reason added, ask) And how strongly do you agree or disagree with this reason for wanting/not wanting to eat fruits and vegetables. (Sort remaining cards into the three piles)

3. *After statements are sorted into piles, sort through pile 1 and ask kids:*
 - Which of these is the most important reason why kids should run around and get lots of exercise? (*Probe: Which would convince you the most that exercise is a really good thing to do?*)
 - Which of these is the most important reason why kids your age don't like to or aren't able to exercise as much as they should? (*Probe: Which of these is the most important reason why you don't run around or exercise as much as you should?*)

D. Language exploratory

1. *Time permitting:* How much exercise or active play do you think kids your age should get? (*Probe: In a typical day, how much time should kids spend being physically active?*) How do you know that? Where did you hear that/learn that?
2. If someone told you that you should (*hold up different statements and discuss one at a time. For example: "be active for an hour every day" or "get exercise for an hour.." or "do active play for an hour..."*) What does that mean you should do? (*Listen to understand which term suggests the kind of activity that really gets your heart going and makes you breath hard/sweat?*) Is it easy or hard for kids to get one-hour/60 minutes of exercise/active play a day? Why do you think that? What makes it easy/hard? *Time permitting, explore if "60 minutes" or "one hour" sounds easier to achieve.*
3. What are some examples of (*exercise/active play*) that kids could do for an hour every day? (*Probe*) What are some examples of exercise/active play that would be fun when you're bored and want something to do, easy/simple to do, help you to learn something new, etc. (*Note: link this list to the key motivation list for active play*)

IV. Campaign Materials (18 minutes)

- A. Commercials (TV, radio and poster) (10 minutes)
(*Switch order of TV spot and radio, then show poster*) Show/play commercial and before they talk about it, ask each child to rate it on 4 pt. face scale – like a lot, like a little, don't like, don't like at all. Then discuss:
 1. Have you ever seen/heard this commercial/poster before? When? Where?
 2. Rating score. Likes/dislikes?
 3. What's the main thing they were trying to tell you with this commercial/poster?
 - a) What were they advertising? What were they trying to get you to do?

4. Why did they say you should eat fruits and vegetables? What do you think about that? Is that a good reason? What, if any, are better reasons to eat f/v?
5. *If not clear if they understood the commercial, ask one child: Pretend (name of friend) didn't just see the commercial. Describe the commercial to him/her. Who was in it? What happened? What did the commercial show you/tell you?*

B. Characters (5 minutes)

1. What do you think of the characters that were in the commercial? (*Spread character cards on the table and probe appeal*) Did you like them or not? (*Listen for any associations with Veggie Tales.*)
2. What did the characters show you/tell you about eating fruits and vegetables? About being physically active? Is that important to you? Does it make you want to eat them/be active?
3. *Time permitting:* If the characters in this commercial were real people, who would they be? How would they act?
 - a. If these characters were a family, who would be the Dad? The Mom? The kids? (Probe age and gender) What tells you that?
 - b. Do you like them all the same or do you have a favorite? Which one is your favorite? Why that one?
4. Would you want to see these characters again in other commercials about f/v? How about on other things like stickers? Notebooks? T-shirts? What could we do to make the characters more fun and interesting to kids? (Probe: use real or cartoon characters? How should they act? How should they talk, interact with each other? What should they do? What kind of "world" should they live in?)
5. (Bring out pictures of "USDA Power Panther" and "Cap'n 5 A Day") *Here are some other characters that are used to tell kids about eating fruits and vegetables.*
 - a. Have you ever seen these characters before? (If yes, probe) Which ones? Where? What do you remember about them?
 - b. How would you compare these characters with the ones you just saw in the commercials? Based just on how they look, which character (or set of characters) do you like the best? (*Probe reasons for preference*)
 - c. Is it a good idea to use characters (*vs photographs/real people*) to tell kids about fruits and vegetables? Why/why not?

C. Logo (3 minutes)

Show logo without tagline first:

1. Have you ever seen this before? Where did you see it? What do you remember?
2. Likes/dislikes? Do you like the way it looks? Why/why not?
3. What do you think of when you see this? What does it say to you? What does it mean? How can you tell that? Who does it look like this would be good for (*Probe, if needed: your age kids? Younger/older kids? Adults?*)

Show Logo with tagline:

1. Now, with these words added to it, what does this say to you? What does it mean? With these words added, does it tell you the same thing or does it mean something different? How is it different?
2. (*Probe appeal of artwork and visuals*) Is there anything we can do to make it more fun, interesting for kids? (*Probe color vs. B&W, real vs. cartoon drawings, etc.*)

VI. . Closing (2 minutes)

- 1) What's the most important thing I should tell adults to do if they want to encourage kids like you to eat more fruits and vegetables?
- 2) And what should they do if they want to encourage kids to get more exercise and be more physically active (*use their term*)?

Moderator to check with back room for any final questions.

Ending: Thank you both very much for taking the time to come here today. I've learned a lot about your thoughts on f/v and pa. Your comments and suggestions have been very helpful. Have a great day!